

Wildlife Art in Bronze by

Roger Smith

Roger Smith's

volume 1 | issue 1

Wild Life & Times



Alaska 2006

August of 2006 found us celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary, a year late, in Alaska. We flew into Anchorage and then rented a chevy (Ford builds the real trucks) with a slide in camper similar to what we own. We picked up our groceries and supplies and drove as far as Palmer, less than an hour out of Anchorage. We just wanted to get someplace to catch up on some sleep and adjust to the five hour time change. The first time I was ever in Palmer I saw T-shirts for sale – “Welcome to the Palmer Rain Festival, January 1st to December 31st”. It was true to form.

Our first major stop was Valdez. The Pink Salmon, also called Humpies, were in for their annual spawning run. They get the name Humpy for the large hump that grows on their back during spawning. Some of the creek mouths were literally packed with fish trying to get upstream. The following day we took a day cruise on Prince William Sound. The weather cleared up just in time and we were able to see whales, sea otters, sea lions and seals. A great day with a clam chowder lunch to boot!

Our next destination was the town of Chicken. One story I've heard is they wanted to name it Ptarmigan, a game bird, but none of the miners living there at the time could spell it. So they settled for Chicken. I bought some “Chicken Creek Saloon” mugs there twenty some years ago. All of them eventually got broken, so part of our mission was to buy a new set. Downtown Chicken consists of a sou-

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Alaska 2006 *(continued)*

venir shop, a saloon and a small restaurant. We also panned for gold at one of the touristy places and found a few specks.

We then made our way down to the east end of the Denali Highway. We're guessing the scenery along the 133 miles is beautiful. I say that because it rained for two days and we didn't see a whole lot. I did manage to get out and catch one Grayling. We were optimistic the weather would clear, so we just hung out, ate and played cards for a day. 37 degrees, rain, snow and sleet are just part the deal for Alaska that time of year. When we did start heading west again, we noticed a lack of east bound traffic. With just about ten miles to go we rounded a bend in the road to see a repair crew and a couple chunks of road washed out. After a nap, some lunch, a walk and four and a half hours, we were on the move again.

Denali National Park – what a place. At Six Million acres it's larger than the State of Massachusetts. Definitely one of this country's gems. We were up at dark thirty a.m. and on a shuttle bus headed for Stony Hill Overlook. 60 miles out, the same 60 miles back making for an eight hour round trip. We didn't realize that August 22nd was so off season. I had taken the same early shuttle bus in July one year and it was full. Our bus had a total of ten passengers. The day was perfect - cool and a little overcast. We saw Dahl Sheep, one Moose, some caribou and eight Grizzly bears. The bears were out feeding in high gear to put on as much fat as possible before hibernating for the winter. By the time we got to the turnaround the sky cleared just in time for us to get a rare clear view of Mt. McKinley. At 20,320 feet above sea level it is North America's highest mountain.

After leaving Denali we went through Anchorage and drove the Seward Highway along Turnagain Arm of Cook Inlet. While we were driving along we needed to make a phone call. We pulled off into a day use area and there stands a moose! We were able to get some

good video of him feeding before he got tired of an audience. That night we camped in State Forest type campground with Sockeye salmon in the creek just behind camp. Of course that section was closed to fishing. I walked down to Portage Creek which was open and caught a couple Chum salmon. They are also called dog salmon because the natives use these to feed their sled dogs through the winter.



We also stopped at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center. Here we were able to get some excellent video reference of moose for some future sculpting projects.



Our last day in Alaska. We returned the camper and rented a mini van to see more of Anchorage. The Alaska Native Heritage Center gave us a glimpse at the culture, art and traditions of Alaska's native people. We then went downtown to visit the Anchorage Museum of History and Art and an art gallery (of course). We wrapped up our trip with a visit to the Alaska Zoo.

Despite being rained on at some point every single day of our ten day trip, it rarely interfered with our plans. We had a blast and can't wait to go back!

Collector's Quote

“As an admirer of Roger Smith's masterful artistry I have collected and gifted several of his sculptures. Figures with whimsy and humor of bears and dog, with power and elegance of a stag, with the meeting of fawn with frog or natural moment of scratching an itch all bring me joy beyond mere satisfaction with the art object itself.”

– Leigh Ferenci

Caring for your indoor bronze

One of the great things about owning bronze sculpture is the minimal maintenance they require to keep looking great for generations.

Before we go any farther, let's talk about placement. The things to keep it away from are high humidity, chlorine, pet urine, sunlight, high temperatures and household cleaners.

The first step is to clean it with a soft, clean cloth, gently wiping it free of dust and fingerprints. I like to use a natural bristle “chip” brush for getting into the crevices. I wrap the metal ferrule with masking tape to keep from scratching the patina. Tag this brush for cleaning only and save it.

Inspect the bronze to see if it needs more cleaning. A damp cloth may be required to remove fly specks and the like.

Prepare another “chip” brush the same way with masking tape. Tag this one for waxing only. The best paste wax I've found for bronze is Trewax®. Carefully brush on a very very thin coat of wax working it into the crevices with bristles. Save both of your brushes in separate plastic bags, keeping them clean for the next time.

Allow the wax to dry for 10 – 15 minutes before buffing with a clean, dry cotton cloth.

Wasn't that easy! Do it once or twice a year to keep your bronze looking its best. In between cleaning/waxing simply keep it dusted off with a soft cloth or a feather duster.

Creature Feature Facts

Whitetail deer fawns of Michigan

Most fawns in this area are born mid May to mid June after a gestation period of 200 – 205 days. Twins are the norm of healthy does and triplets not uncommon. Birth weight is 5 – 8 lbs. with the males weighing about 20% more than females. At birth the does' milk is 10 – 12% fat; twice that of domestic cows. This allows the fawns to double their weight in 15 days and double again in another 15 days. For the first week the fawns' routine is pretty much nursing 4 – 6 times per day and sleeping. Fawns are able to walk at 20 minutes old, and able to out run a man at 5 – 6 days old. At birth the males outnumber females 106 to 100, however females outnumber males within a week. The males' more active, aggressive, and independent nature gets them into trouble.

The Story on Spots

The spots make for excellent camouflage, especially when the fawn is bedded among the brown leaves and forest litter. My own limited observation shows that the spots are nearly identical from the right to left sides of their body. They lose their spots when they shed their summer hair and grow their winter coat.

A Fawn Story

A friend and I were in the Upper Peninsula years ago clearing dead trees along a two track. We had worked in this one area for forty five minutes with two chainsaws running almost constantly. We decided to take a break and have a seat on a log in the area we were cutting. After sitting there for a few minutes, we noticed a fawn, curled up, lying behind the log. It had been there all along as we had worked. I figured as long as it was going to lie there I would run back to the cabin and get my camera.

Was this fawn "abandoned"? I hardly doubt it. Somewhere out there, the doe was keeping an eye on us. She was just waiting for us to leave. Does purposely leave the area where their fawns are bedded to keep from drawing the attention of predators. Unless you know for certain that the doe has been killed, never touch or try to rescue a fawn. Just petting a fawn found in the wild could cause its death. One study showed that five percent of fawns touched by humans were abandoned by their mothers.



Sleeping Fawn - miniature



I have a friend who runs a deer farm – an excellent source for subjects.



This fawn remained asleep even as we felled timber almost on top of him! Above: Jay takes a break within arm's reach.

Past Events

The first weekend of December found us at Chippewa Nature Center in Midland, MI for their Annual Wildlife Art Show & Sale. Big fun at a beautiful facility.

The following Saturday was our own Christmas Wildlife Art Exhibition & Sale. We had a good crowd joining us for plenty of food, fun and music.

Here I am with one of my biggest fans... my mother!



Galleries

My works are currently available at these fine galleries:

Gallery on Main

4184 Main Street
Bay Harbor, MI 49770
Phone: 231-439-2745
www.galleryonmainbh.com

Lansing Art Gallery

113 S. Washington Sq.,
Lansing, MI 48933
Phone: 517-374-6400
www.lansingartgallery.org

The Master's Fine Art of Loveland

343 East 7th Street
Loveland, CO 80537
Phone: 970-667-4138
www.themastersfineart.com

Twisted Fish Art Gallery

10443 S. Bayshore Dr.
Elk Rapids, MI 49629
Phone: 231-264-0123
www.twistedfishart.com

Wildlife Art in Bronze by

2007 *Roger Smith* SHOWS

The Master's Fine Art of Loveland

Loveland, CO
Friday, April 13th, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Saturday, April 14th, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
www.themastersfineart.com

Whisper in the Woods Nature & Wildlife Fine Art Show

DeVos Place
Downtown Grand Rapids, MI
April 20 – 22, 2007
www.whisperinthewoods.com
(Held in conjunction with the West Michigan Cottage & Lakefront Living Show)

Sculpture in the South

Summerville, South Carolina
May 19th & 20th, 2007
www.sculptureinthesouth.com

Lapeer's Fine Arts Celebration

Historic Downtown Lapeer, MI
June 2nd & 3rd, 2007

Michigan Magazine Expo

2007 Arts and Crafts Show
Michigan Magazine Museum
Comins, MI
June 23rd & 24th, 2007

1st Annual Botkins Sculpture Invitational

Botkins Community Park
Botkins, OH
July 28th & 29th, 2007
www.botkins.k12.oh.us/students/sculpture

Visit www.RogersWildlifeArt.com for the latest information and to view an online gallery.

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P.O. Box 522
Leslie, MI 49251

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
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Permit No. 258

Wild Life & Times



LIFE SIZE!



What are Pre-Cast Offers?

Selected new sculptures are made available as Pre-Cast Offers for a limited time before they are actually cast at the foundry.

As a Pre-Cast Partner your piece is reserved before they are put on the open market. You not only get the lowest edition numbers, but also save a substantial amount of money.

A deposit reserves your piece. Balance at delivery.

Completion time for the casting process varies, so call early if you need yours for a gift or special event.

As always, packaging and delivery are free to any of the lower 48 states.

What's Next?

I've done a small clay "sketch" of a Grizzly Bear striding up hill. That generated some interest in a larger version about 16" tall. I'll get started on that one next.

I've had some ideas for some Red Fox pieces for a few years. I just haven't been able to get the reference I need yet. Maybe this year!

The next big piece I want to do is a life size version of something very similar to my "High Alert" whitetail buck.

We may be getting a new studio to work out of. More on that later.

Visit www.RogersWildlifeArt.com for pre-cast pricing and details.